



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security

“Innovation at TSA: Examining Threat Mitigation Through Technology Acquisitions Reform”

January 18, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

Before we begin I would like to welcome and thank Administrator Pekoske for joining us this morning to once again discuss how we can strengthen our aviation security.

Administrator, when you appeared before our Full Committee in early November, we had just been briefed by yourself and the DHS Inspector General in a classified setting about specific vulnerabilities at our airports. In the hearing that followed, I said that I found the briefing to be “disturbing.” And I know my colleagues felt the same way.

As we have seen across Europe and in New York City, many of the most recent terror attacks have been carried out with vehicles and other low-tech means. However, with millions of Americans traveling annually by airplane, our aviation sector still remains the “crown jewel” of targets.

Even though there are 60,000 TSA employees working hard to protect nearly 450 airports across the country, we still need the most innovative and cutting edge technology to keep our planes and passengers safe.

As I stated at our Full Committee hearing in November, “America’s enemies only have to be right once, but we have to be right 100% of the time.” That is why I remain concerned by the agency’s inability to deploy Computed Tomography (CT) and Credential Authentication, which would greatly enhance detection of threatening objects.

This concern was made clear in a November 9th letter to Acting Secretary Duke from myself and Chairman Katko, urging TSA to reform the acquisition and procurement processes for screening technologies. Our letter also contained nine questions about what actions DHS and TSA are taking to improve the overall screening system. We appreciate TSA’s efforts to get a response to our Committee, however, we were underwhelmed by the lack of details.

In particular, one of the responses stated that CT systems beyond the prototype phase, would not be deployed until early to mid 2019.

There is an airport in Amsterdam (Schiphol) that already uses American made CT to screen bags. Not having this kind of enhanced security at our own airports is just unacceptable.

It is also important that TSA work with our international partners to install CT scanners at airports overseas which serve as the last point of departure for in-bound flights. This is something I have expressed to you in our most recent conversation and I am hopeful we can begin to make progress on that very soon.

To keep our homeland safe, we must have the best technology efficiently and effectively deployed without further delay.

Today, I am hoping we can have a detailed discussion on how we can get that done so that the American people are better protected.

Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time.

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